



Are flood victims more concerned about climate change than other people? The role of direct experience in risk perception and behavioural response

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Abstract:

Climate change is a threat to human health and life, both now and in the future. Despite this, studies show that the public typically do not consider the issue a priority concern or a direct, personal threat. Furthermore, few are taking any preventive or protective action. Previous studies identify direct experience as a major influence on risk perception, learning and action. Drawing on such evidence, this paper focuses on the intangibility of climate change as a key impediment to personal engagement and explores whether relevant experiences of flooding and air pollution influence individuals' knowledge, attitudes, risk perception and behavioural responses to climate change. Perhaps surprisingly, interviews and a survey conducted in the south of England indicate flood victims differ very little from other participants in their understanding of and responses to climate change, but that experience of air pollution does significantly affect perceptions of and behavioural responses to climate change. Air pollution victims are no more likely to cite pollution as a cause of climate change than non-victims; but they do have higher pro-environmental values. Respondents with these values are significantly more likely to consider climate change a salient risk and to take action in response to it. Therefore the relationship between air pollution experience and responses to climate change may be indirect and mediated by environmental values. The paper concludes by highlighting implications of this research for developing climate change policies and strategies for public engagement.

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Resource Description

Communication:

resource focus on research or methods on how to communicate or frame issues on climate change; surveys of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs about climate change

A focus of content

Communication Audience:

audience to whom the resource is directed

Public

Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

Air Pollution, Extreme Weather Event, Sea Level Rise

Extreme Weather Event: Flooding

Geographic Feature: ☒

resource focuses on specific type of geography

None or Unspecified

Geographic Location: ☒

resource focuses on specific location

Non-United States

Non-United States: Europe

European Region/Country: European Country

Other European Country : United Kingdom

Health Impact: ☒

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Respiratory Effect

Mitigation/Adaptation: ☒

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation

Resource Type: ☒

format or standard characteristic of resource

Research Article

Timescale: ☒

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified